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*Britain's academy of sciences, The Royal Society, is warning that the world will have to increase food production by 50% by 2050. It's recently published a report calling on the UK government to spend more than \$3bn on research into crop technology. Keith Adams reports:*

The Royal Society says that by the middle of the century **the global population** may reach 9 billion. And **feeding those extra mouths is a major challenge** for the planet, **compounded by the spectre** of global warming.

Professor David Baulcombe of Cambridge University, who led the research, says a billion people are already **malnourished**. Professor Baulcombe says the money the government should **plough into crop science** is needed immediately. If we wait ten years, he says, it may be too late. The genetic manipulation he refers to could produce crop strains **resistant to** disease, drought and salinity.

But the issue of **genetically modified** crops is still **something of a hot potato**, despite the technology being already used by millions of farmers. Environmental groups say the usefulness of **GM** crops has not been proven, and the threat they pose by letting altered genes **spread into** other plants is significant.

Keith Adams, BBC News, London

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>the global population</b>	the number of people in the world
<b>feeding those extra mouths is a major challenge</b>	making sure the increased population has enough food is a very difficult task
<b>compounded by the spectre</b>	combined with and made worse by the threat
<b>malnourished</b>	not getting enough food, or not getting the food they need
<b>plough into</b>	steadily invest in/allocate to
<b>crop science</b>	research into ways of improving plants used for food (e.g. through genetic manipulation, or modification - see below)
<b>resistant to</b>	that are not affected by (something that is considered negative)
<b>genetically modified (GM)</b>	when the genes of plants are altered by people, not nature, in order to change the way they grow or produce crops
<b>something of a hot potato</b>	a sensitive or controversial issue that is not easy to deal with (a <b>hot potato</b> is a set colloquial expression)
<b>spread into</b>	get inside, contaminate

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8317511.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/10/091021\\_witn\\_uk\\_crops.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2009/10/091021_witn_uk_crops.shtml)